



April 8, 2021

The Honorable John Katko
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Katko:

Thank you for your letter requesting that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities, as well as the direct support professionals who provide them with frontline services, be prioritized for Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) vaccination.

As our country continues to battle the COVID-19 pandemic, CDC is working to ensure the health and safety of the communities we serve. We have provided guidance for caring for people with developmental disabilities during the COVID-19 pandemic on our website,¹ including the direct service providers² who assist them. Based on the most current scientific understanding, most people with intellectual and developmental disabilities are not naturally at higher risk for becoming infected with or having severe illness from the virus that causes COVID-19.¹ The risk stratification of medical conditions may be updated at any time as the science evolves, and individuals with any underlying medical condition should consult with their healthcare providers regarding vaccination and other treatment. As stated in your letter, people with intellectual and developmental disabilities may live in group homes and CDC has also provided guidance for these facilities during the pandemic.³

While the end goal is to offer vaccines to the entire U.S. population, identifying priority groups for COVID-19 vaccination was critical while vaccine supply was limited. As you noted, the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP), CDC's independent vaccine advisory committee, voted to recommend that those with medical conditions associated with increased risk for severe COVID-19 be included in phase 1c of their interim recommendation for allocation of COVID-19 vaccine.⁴ CDC adopted that recommendation, which provided guidance for federal, state, territorial, and local jurisdictions in developing and implementing their vaccination plans.

The conditions at high-risk for severe COVID-19 illness represent those for which there is sufficient evidence to draw conclusions and make recommendations.^{5,6}

¹ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-developmental-disabilities.html>

² <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/direct-service-providers.html>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/group-homes.html>

⁴ Dooling K, Marin M, Wallace M, et al. The Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices' Updated Interim Recommendation for Allocation of COVID-19 Vaccine — United States, December 2020. MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. ePub: 22 December 2020. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm695152e2>

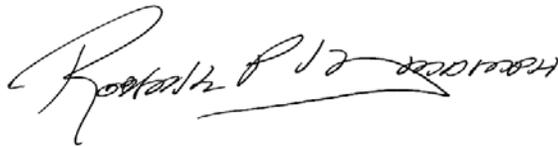
⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/people-with-medical-conditions.html>

⁶ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/evidence-table.html>

While the list of medical conditions that put people at increased risk for severe COVID-19 illness has been used by state health officials and other decision makers to inform vaccine eligibility during the first months of the vaccination program, many states have now opened vaccination eligibility to all adults. Each state has its own vaccination plan, but every state is expected to open vaccine eligibility to all adults by April 19, 2021.⁷ In addition, President Biden's administration is taking action to expand COVID-19 vaccination sites and to ensure that 90 percent of Americans have a vaccine site within five miles of their home by April 19, 2021.⁸

We appreciate your letter and support, and that of Congress overall, as we work together to fight COVID-19. CDC remains committed to protecting the American public during this pandemic. Please contact Jeff Reczek in our CDC Washington Office at (202) 245-0600 or jreczek@cdc.gov if you have further questions. We are sending a copy of this response to the co-signers of your letter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rochelle P. Walensky", with a horizontal line underneath.

Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH
Director, CDC

⁷ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2021/04/06/remarks-by-president-biden-marking-the-150-millionth-covid-19-vaccine-shot/>

⁸ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/29/fact-sheet-president-biden-announces-90-of-the-adult-u-s-population-will-be-eligible-for-vaccination-and-90-will-have-a-vaccination-site-within-5-miles-of-home-by-april-19/>